

School Garden Q&As

Purpose:

This instruction sets forth the policy regarding the operation of a school garden.

Scope:

Sponsors participating in the National School Lunch (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP).

Description:

Question #1: Can the school food service use funds from the nonprofit school food service account to purchase seeds for a school garden?

Answer: Yes, with the understanding that the garden is used within the context of the program, i.e. selling the food or providing food in the classroom as part of an educational lesson.

Question #2: Can the school food service use funds from the nonprofit school food service account to purchase items for the school garden such as fertilizer, watering cans, rakes, etc.?

Answer: Yes, as long as the items are used for the purpose of starting and maintaining the garden.

Question #3: Can a school sell food grown in their school garden that was funded using the nonprofit school food service account?

Answer: Yes, as long as the revenue from the sale of the food accrues back to the nonprofit school food service account. Schools can serve the produce as part of a reimbursable meal or sell it a la carte, to parents, to PTA members, at a roadside stand, etc.

Question #4: Are there health/safety issues involved with school gardens?

Answer: Yes. SFAs need to familiarize themselves with the Federal, State, and local requirements regarding health and sanitation issues.

Question #5 Can the school food service purchase produce from another school organization that is maintaining and managing the garden, such as Future Farmers of America (FFA)?

Answer: Yes, the school food service may purchase produce from a garden run by a school organization such as FFA, which is an agricultural education program for students.

Question #6: Can funds received through the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program (FFVP) be used to purchase seeds/tools/equipment for a school garden?

Answer: No. FFVP funds may not be used for the purchase of any materials for school gardens.

Question #7: What if there is excess produce from the garden left over at the end of the school year?

Answer: The school should first see if the excess food can be used to benefit another program such as the SFSP. If that is not possible, they could try selling the food (as always, the profit must accrue back to the nonprofit school food service account) or donate it in accordance with State and local health/safety regulations.

SOURCE: FNS MEMO JULY 29, 2009.